



# Summit Helps Fight Recidivism in Central Illinois

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PEORIA - In Illinois, it costs taxpayers \$21,000 a year to house one inmate in prison and the rate at which people return to prison is 47 percent, but a program called Summit of Hope aims to help them contribute tax dollars instead of taking them.

"If you give them hope, but not just hope, opportunity, that right there fights recidivism and that saves tax payer dollars," said Marcus King, Summit of Hope Coordinator.

The expo is sanctioned by the Illinois Department of Corrections and provides resources to help ex-cons get their lives back on track.

"Say a person has been gone, they've been gone for 10 years. They're not going to have a current state ID or license. As for jobs, they're not going to know where to go," King said.

There were 60 vendors at the event providing everything from healthcare to substance abuse help and even representatives from Illinois universities and colleges.

Justin Thrall, 22, is one of those people looking for a new start.

"Just got an armed burglary charge and now I'm just trying to make up for it and do probation," Thrall said.

While he does have a job, Thrall said finding work was tougher because of his record.

"Why did you do it, what's your conviction and I mean, I always had to go through the whole storyline and it's really nerve-racking I mean, it's hard," Thrall said.

Thrall is lucky enough to have work- but says he's using the summit as a way to further his education at a place that will look past his record.

"I want to go to college soon. Like, I haven't really gotten scheduled into college yet so everything kind of helped me realize that I can take this path it'll be a better path for me in the future."

King said, even though they've made mistakes in the past, many of these people shouldn't have to keep paying for them in the future.

"I know people deserve second chances," he said.

The good news is the number of people who have gone back to prison in Illinois has dropped by eight percent in the past two years. Organizers hope programs like this will continue that trend.